



USE THE STEPS
TRAVEL BEYOND THIS POINT
W/O SPONSOR NOT ADVISED

Simple Directions

A Guide to Your 4th Step Inventory

April 2019 - Second Edition

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With thanks to: Ken D. of the One Way Group, Los Angeles, CA; Barefoot Bob, barefootsworld.org and his heirs; many Inventory-related speakers on Fourth-Step process who have spoken in meetings, conventions, round-ups, workshops and classes (available for free download through xaspeakers.org); Joe A., Cliff D., and Copy Editors Rich T., Jim W. and Gary P.

Unless otherwise indicated, quotes are from “The Big Book,” or the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published by A.A. World Service Office.

Yes, there are repetitions throughout this book. We know.

Simple Directions can be downloaded for free from archive.org through <https://www.archive.org>. Search for the booklet by name. This is the 2019 Edition. The printed version will be made available through Amazon.com and LuLu.com.

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Notes on the 2019 Edition

Since this guide was first offered in 2012 many people have shared their suggestions and corrections to the original text.

This edition was created primarily to provide the book in more formats to use on various platforms now available. These include a smaller .pdf version to make it friendlier for use on smart phones and tablets, an ePub for MacOS/iOS readers, .mobi for readers using Amazon Kindle devices, and various document options.

But this also allowed improvement of the text with expansion and better editing for context and references.

We would like to offer our thanks to our friends in Recovery for their effort and hope the application of most of these comments makes this guide more effective and of greater value to the newcomer doing their first Inventory.

Some people are offended at the suggestion of a “First Inventory” because it implies doing another Inventory in the future. Some people will huff “I already did my inventory,” while the book tells us “this is the beginning of a life-long process.” We are not trying to offend.

Step Ten says we will “continue to practice these principles in all our affairs” to ensure that we do not slip backwards from the progress we made in our initial attempt the Inventory and Amends. Step Ten is a very clever way to make us continue doing Steps One thru Nine as needed. Every day.

In the future, when you identify something brand new and are writing it down for the first time, it is a new Fourth Step Inventory.

If it is more detail on something that already appears in your original inventory (or a previous inventory) it is more work on your old inventory.

If it something new that comes up in your “present” that is a continuation from your original inventory, it is “Working a Tenth Step” on that new, but known, item from the old Fourth Step.

Some of us are content to say we did one Step Four and continue to do Step Ten as necessary.

Some of us do a periodic Step Four every few years to see where we have progressed and where we still need to be diligent in our effort to live the new life Recovery has given us.

Some of us define the first time we put down a name in writing, that it is a new Fourth - the first time we have looked at that particular name. When we are reviewing a name of a person, place, or thing we have visited before, we call that part of our Tenth Step.

Define your Inventory work as you need to define it, but do the work. Half measures availed us nothing. Do the work, you get the result.

*Joe A., Raleigh, NC
April 2019*

Steps One, Two and Three did not create the problem—they are the statements of the truth of your disease and your situation. They are the beginning of the leveling of pride and ego, which we are told will become a lifelong process. In each of these steps you begin the difficult process of telling the truth.

“*The Work*” is often referenced in AA meetings, but sometimes people can go for years without knowing what “The Work” is. For simplicity, let us take a moment to define “The Work” for your own progress.

On close examination we find a second structure in the Big Book. The area from the Cover through Page 52 are a summary for Step One - defining alcoholism and the alcoholic, with an introduction to the spiritual nature of our disease.

The 36 pages from page 52 (the paragraph with “The Bedevilments”) to page 88 contain Steps Two through Step Eleven — “*The Work*. ”

“Do the Work and you get the result!”

Many men and women with double-digit sobriety report that they have not seen anyone start a Fourth Step and stop before beginning their amends in Step Nine *and stay sober!*

The process requires completion. Alcoholics are great beginners, but not so good on finishing what they start. If you make the commitment, then take the action and the results will follow. Finish this process!

You will never feel finished. The book tells us this is “*the beginning of a lifelong process*,” but it also tells us that this way of life is “*a design for living that really works*. ”

Dr. Bob's Review

If you visited the home of Dr. Bob in Akron, one of the things you will find is a review of Steps One, Two, and Three. It would be appropriate for you and your sponsor examine this document before you proceed to Step Four.

Have you learned and have you fully conceded to your innermost self that you are an alcoholic?

Do you have any reservations or lingering ideas that one day you will be immune to or UNAFFECTED by drinking alcohol? (Or drugs, or one of the qualifiers for the more than seventy public Twelve Step Programs)

Step Two (YES or NO)

Do you believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a power greater than you?

Step Three (YES or NO)

Are you convinced about Steps One and Two?

Are you convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success?

Are you convinced that your troubles are basically of your own making, and that they arise out of you and that you are an extreme example of self will run riot?

Are you convinced that you must be rid of this selfishness?

Are you convinced that your selfishness is killing you?

Are you convinced that there is often no way of entirely getting rid of self without a higher power's aid?

Are you convinced that you must have a Higher Power's help?

Are you convinced that you have to quit playing the role of a Higher Power - that it never worked?

Are you convinced that a Higher Power is going to be your Director, Principle, Father and Employer?

Are you convinced that you have thought well about taking this Step?

Are you convinced that you can at last abandon yourself utterly to a Higher Power?

The "Third Step Prayer?"

In the Big Book you will find:

"God I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Page 63

Remember, the next paragraph on Page 63 says "The wording, of course, is quite optional." It is important that you mean what you say when you pray. Re-write the prayer if you need to, so that it says what you want to say in your own words. If you can take the words as presented and come to mean them, the prayer as written can work for you.

If, however, you find it hard to relate to the words as written, if you do not use "Thee" and "Thine" as part of your normal language, you can take the prayer and re-state it in your own words, use "You" and "Your," so that you can say a heart-felt prayer of surrender and willingness to proceed with your Recovery.

Write your version of this prayer onto the first page of your notebook.

The Action of the Third Step

The Big Book says at the end of Step 3 (emphasis added):

“NEXT we launch out on a course of VIGOROUS action, the first step of which is a personal house-cleaning, which many of us had never attempted.”

Though our decision (Step 3) was a vital and crucial step (so it's important), it could have little permanent effect(it doesn't amount to much) unless at once (immediately or now) followed by a strenuous effort-to face (where we face these things is in Steps 4 - 6), and to be rid of (where we get rid of these things is in Steps 7 - 9), the things in ourselves which had been blocking us — we can't turn our will and our lives over to the care of God until we get unblocked from doing so by immediately and quickly working Steps Four through Nine. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Before he died, Dr. Bob told Bill “Keep it Simple.” You can follow that suggestion in your Inventory.

Preparing for Step Four

The first thing you need to do is talk with your sponsor. Does your sponsor agree that you are ready to take this next step? Go through this booklet with your sponsor to be sure that he, or she, agrees with the process it presents. Your sponsor may have used a different system and if anything is found in these pages that is in conflict with your sponsor - go with the direction your sponsor gives you. Your sponsor knows you better than the authors of this booklet!

Make a commitment on how much time you will spend each day. Keep your word — spend that amount of time each day, no matter what. The amount of time every day you agreed to, no more, no less. Set an alarm if you need to. Do this for your recovery and do it every day.

Get a cheap notebook to dedicate to this Inventory. It can be a simple spiral bound notebook, a composition book, loose notebook paper in a 3-ring binder, or other empty volume. You might have one left over from a previous “good intention” attempt at the Steps, which is still blank and usable. If you have to buy one, you'll find them cheap anywhere they sell school supplies.

Get two or three reliable pens or pencils with you. The excuses “my pen stopped working” or “my pencil broke” will not be an available.

Have your own copy of the Big Book and, if your sponsor agrees, a copy of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Some people find it useful to use Inventory guides from other Twelve Step Programs or commercial publisher.

Spend a few moments before each writing session in prayer or quiet time. It can be as little as two minutes, never more than four. Have “quiet time” or pray. Create your one personal ritual to begin the work.

Do what works for you, but do it.

Do the work, you get the result. Half measures availed us nothing.

Using A Notebook

Open the notebook and on the first page write your name, how to contact you and whatever else your Sponsor feels you should put on that page.

Sometimes that can include the date of sobriety, or a request that anyone finding your notebook not read it. Some people doing an Inventory chooses to keep their unfinished inventory under lock and key.

The Two Page Spread

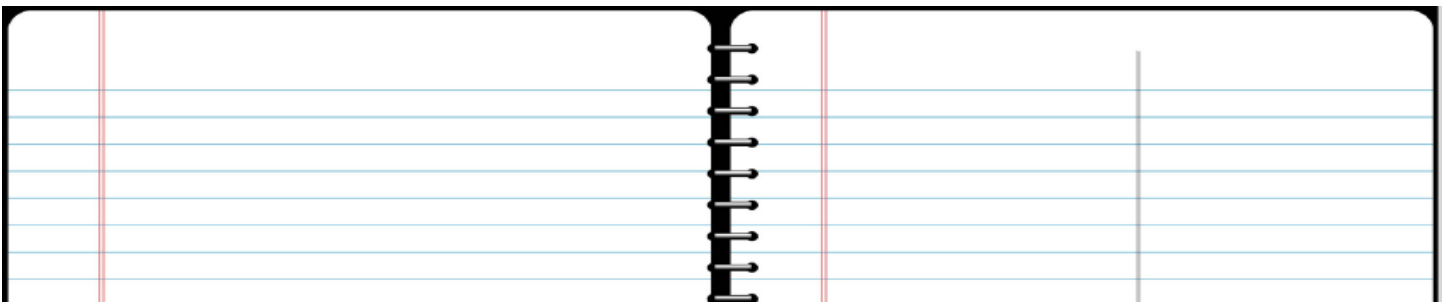
When you open the notebook you have a two page spread in front of you. Use that to your advantage.

On the right side page, draw a line — approximately down the middle.

On the right side, use the basic red-line margin as your first column.

You will do several sections of the inventory (such as sex, fear, resentment, harms, assets) but under each section you will follow the same format. On each section you work down the columns, not across.

Take that deep breath again, become calm and put your or first pen to paper on the first page.



A wire bound notebook opened to show the 2 Page spread.

You sponsor may suggest a certain number of sessions per week - 20-60 minutes committed in advance. Your schedule may only allow one session per week or even time every day - make this decision with your sponsor. And keep to that schedule, no matter what.

Try to find a place where you can concentrate to work. It should be quiet - free of distractions but you will hear of people who worked at their inventories while the kids made noise elsewhere elsewhere in the house, or sitting in their car at a lake or wooded spot, or sitting in a coffee shop, or a public library or even a special “writing” meeting occasionally offered by individual AA groups. You will find you can complete your Inventory if your commitment is to finish and is not dependent on some condition you set before you begin.

When you sit down to write, be comfortable and take a few moments to be quiet. Pray and meditate as you feel is appropriate - you may be able to find the quiet you need in a few moments, or you may need ten or twenty minutes of prayer and meditation to begin.

Don’t try to judge in advance what you should or should not write down - if you think of it, write it down!

If you are writing an inventory after a relapse, talk to your sponsor. Most sponsors tell a returning member of AA not to depend on the previous inventory (or inventories). The issues raised on those previous inventories were not handled by someone who stayed sober.

NOTE: Your Inventory is not a long narrative to explain everything. Your sponsor may (or may not) approve of you writing such a narrative as part of your recovery, but that is separate from your Inventory. The Inventory is clearly shown in the Big Book and this guide is to help you complete that process.

Preparing to Write

We do not care what you like, agree with, understand or want to do ... *we care what you do!*

Do not think about “*what it means*” at this point. You are just writing down columns. Just write down the names, down the column. Then write the reason they are on the list, down the column. Then write what it effects, down the column. Do not try to connect it up horizontally - follow the directions.

This is the work you must do to stay sober. As one shoe company ad says -- “Just Do It!”

Start writing.

| <i>I'm resentful at:</i> | <i>The Cause</i> | <i>Affects my:</i> |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Mr. Brown | His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office. | Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Security. |
| Mrs. Jones | She's a nut - she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend She's a gossip. | Self-esteem (fear) Personal relationship. Self-esteem (fear) |
| My employer | Unreasonable-Unjust -Overbearing- Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account. | Self-esteem(fear) Security. |
| My wife | Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name. | Pride - Personal sex relations - Security (fear) |

Sample, found on Page 63, The Big Book

Remember, we can write too little, but we can never write too much. Your sponsor may tell you to ignore something you wrote down during your 5th Step but do not ignore anything while writing your 4th.

If you think of it, write it down

Write Your Fourth Step

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Why on the list (19 words MAXIMUM)</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mr. Brown | His attention to my wife; told my wife about my mistress; Brown may get my job at the office. |
| Mrs. Jones | She's a nut - snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking, he's my friend. She's a gossip. |
| Employer (Name) | Unreasonable - Unjust - Overbearing. Threatens to fire me for dinking and padding my expense account. |
| Wife (Name) | Misunderstand and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name. |
| Ms. Mary (1st Grade) | Made fun of my voice in front of the class. |
| Becky | Laughed at me in front of my friends in cafeteria. Gave me the nickname "Squirrely" |
| Cousin Ralph | Had better toys than me, wouldn't share them or let me take any home. |

The notebook version showing Name and Why they are on your list.

Work down, not across.

On the left side of the left hand page, on the left side of the red margin, write the first name for your Inventory. Person, Institution, Principle... whatever ever name that is your you need to add.

Column 1: The Names

Write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, write a name... It does not matter how much you feel about this person, institution or situation - write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line.

No matter what. Write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, and so on.

That is not a suggestion - that is a direction. You will see why we do this in the next stage.

For each section of your inventory.

When you can look at the list for 15 or 20 minutes and not come up with a new name, then you are ready to do the next column.

NOTE: If a name occurs to you in the wrong section, write it down - it is better to write it now than to forget it later. Your life is not cleanly divided in to clean, neat sections.

Column 2: Why Are They On Your List?

This goes in Column three, the left-hand column on the right hand page.

Why they are on your list should be considered and the shortest possible statement will cut to the core of your reaction to them and what they did, or that you may think they did.

Look closely at the sample on Page 65 in the Big Book (shown to right). The name with the longest reason for being on the list *uses only 19 words*. We are learning to discipline ourselves instead of "explaining." When you write more about why they are on your list, you begin explaining why they are wrong and why you were right, or however you try to manipulate your audience.

Nineteen (19) words per name. That is not a suggestion, that is a rule. The shortest way say what you need to say about that name.

You may be tempted to write a long narrative of how they have wronged you. Your sponsor may decide you should write such a narrative - but that is not your Inventory.

Think of it as a police report - "just the facts." What would someone in that room seen?

You may want to tell what someone else thought or wanted. Don't do it. You weren't in their mind — you don't know. You do not know what someone else thought or wanted — even if they told you. They might have been lying.

In this example the one who has the most written gets just 19 words. If we are following the directions,

you should be able to state, in 19 words or less, exactly why they are on your list.

When you write the reason for the name being on our list, you are to tell us what happened. This column is reporting - even the phrase like “she’s a nut” might be allowed if that is why she is on your list, even if you aren’t qualified to make a determination of another person’s sanity.

Do not explain, just say why they are on your list. Don’t rush it, but don’t drag your feet.

When you can look at the list for 15 or 20 minutes and not come up with a new name, then you are ready to do the next column.

Column 3: What Does It Effect?

Here is your chance to tell what that person, ideal, institution or situation threatened.

For your Sex Inventory use the same format: two-page spread with a line down the middle of the second page.

“To sum up about sex: We earnestly

pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.”

Page 70

Work down, not across.

When you can look at your list for 20 minutes without thinking of another name, start the next column.

| Affects my ... | |
|---|--|
| Sex relations, self-esteem (fear) | |
| Security | |
| Personal relationships, self-esteem (fear) | |
| Self-esteem (fear), security | |
| Pride - Personal sex relations | |
| Security (fear) | |
| Pride, self-esteem, relationships with classmates. | |
| Pride, self-esteem, relationship with my friends. | |
| Greed, Pride, Envy, felt I did not deserve nice toys. | |
| Pride, fear, how my parents | |

What Was Effected by the Name and Why on your list

- Was it your personal standing or position?

- Your Pride?
- Your financial security?
- Your self esteem?
- The way it caused other people to view you?
- Your sexual relationships?
- Your business relationships or friendships?
- Your legal position?
- Your criminal activities?
- Your fear?

Do you have something that was affected that is NOT listed in the examples. Later in this booklet you will find a list of suggestions from the One Way Group in Los Angeles from around 1960. They may help you fill out your third column.

About Sex

You are expected to list your resentments, your fears, and your sexual conduct. You will also deal with people you have harmed (Step 8).

Our literature offers several comments with the word “assets” in the text.

“The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. The purpose of doing an inventory of your Assets is not to give you a chance to reduce the impact of your fears, your resentments, your sexual conduct or the people you have harmed.”
and Twelve, Page 46

the thought that takes over your brain, to “feel again.” It might be great, but it still takes you out of the “Now.” Which is where you live. If you think of it, put it down.

Inventory Prompts

These are prompts to help you think of topics during your inventory. These are drawn from the Inventory Guide provided by the One Way Group of Los Angeles in the 1950s, the lectures of Scott L., and several other inventory guides available through the internet or discussed in the talks by speakers on <http://www.xa-speakers.org>. These are suggestions, nor requirements nor judgements.

FEARS / RESENTMENTS

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Other Races | Other Cultures | Abandonment |
| The Unknown | Intimacy | Disapproval |
| Rejection | Confrontation | Sobriety |
| Hospitals | Responsibility | Feelings |
| Getting Old | Hurting Others | Violence |
| Staying Alive | Death | Government |
| Gangs | Gossip | Guns |
| Change | | Your Sponsor |

Writing This Inventory

Plus others not listed

INSTITUTIONS

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Bible | Church | Religion |
| Law | Authority | Government |
| Education System | Philosophy | Nationality |
| | Correctional System | |
| | Mental Health System | |

Plus others not listed

PRINCIPLES

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Diety | Growing Up | Honesty |
| (Jesus, Allah, Satan, etc.) | Laws | Rules |
| Seven Deadly Sins | | Ten Commandments |
| Adultery | Golden Rule | Honesty |
| Marital or Social | | Responsibility |

Plus others not listed

SEX

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|
| Abortion | Adultery | Incest |
| Animal Sex | Indecent Exposure | Pornography |
| Masturbation | Prostitution | Fetishes |
| Same Sex | Repression | Transvestism |
| Masochism (Mental or Physical pain on self) | | |
| Sadism (Mental or Physical pain on others) | | |
| Rape (Statutory or Forced) | | |
| | Fraud Sex (False Promises) | |
| | Arson (Re: desire) | |

Plus any deviation from “normal sex” as taught to you.

NOTE: “Resentment” is derived from the French and the means “to feel again.” Resentment is not always negative. It is any recalled set of thoughts that take you to some other time - good or bad. It can be

More Inventory Work

This is not orthodox AA Inventor structure and your Sponsor may suggest you ignore Assets and Gifts. Many people believe that an Inventory is only to detail your failings and negative history. It is to be an inventory — a “*fact finding mission*” and “*the beginning of a lifelong process*.”

The fact finding means to identify the aspects of your past and present. The lifelong process means you may not discovery everything the first time through.

If you identify Assets or Gifts, it is not for the purpose of making you feel superior or to diminish need to correct the mountain of Defects and Shortcomings. It is to remind you that you are one of God’s Kids — imperfect but not worthless. It is to remind you *to keep your hands off*. You do not need to fix what isn’t broken. Perhaps you will exercise your ability to be grateful for the existence of something positive from your Inventory.

Following the directions means following all of the directions. For your inventory this will include your Assets.

Assets

A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking complete inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.

Throughout the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions our willingness to view our assets is used repeatedly to give us new context to view old thoughts and as a guide toward a healthy approach to our life and the lessons we continue to learn.

“We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets.” Page.124

“When that happens, our great natural assets, the instincts, have turned into physical and mental liabilities.” Twelve and Twelve, Page 42

“Everywhere we saw failure and misery transformed by humility into priceless assets.” Twelve and Twelve, Page 75

“Under these conditions, the pains of failure are converted into assets” Twelve and Twelve, Page 93

“An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.” Twelve and Twelve, Page 95

“Can we transform these calamities into assets, sources of growth and comfort to ourselves and those about us?” Twelve and Twelve, Page 113

In the same way, we may use the “**Seven Deadly Sins**” as a guide to discovering our defects, it may be appropriate to use the “**Seven Heavenly Virtues**” in relation to our Assets.

This is a simple list and may be outside our personal spiritual structure - it is offered as an additional focus for your Inventory. All of the world’s faiths and codes of ethics have similar lists of goals and positive attributes we try to achieve.

Chastity - This is not simply the maintaining of sexual virginity until marriage, but also your conduct in all areas of sex. Did you lie for sex, manipulate, cheat on your spouse or otherwise place your personal desire over your behavior? Do you have any point where you behaved properly?

Charity - Did you care for others with your time, resources and affections, or did you give to get? Was your generosity based on helping the other person or satisfying your own ego and superiority? Was the focus of your kindness on others or on yourself? Or do you have times where you were helpful in with thought of someone other than yourself, without a selfish motive?

Temperance - This is not simply avoiding alcohol - which we have admitted to failure in our participation in our First Step. This idea is the ability to become a healthy person, even with the areas of your life where “indulgence” can lead to a new problem. Was there ever a time where you did not engage in the Gluttony of excess with food *or* drink?

Moderation - Did you avoid excess in food, righteousness, pride, sex, possessions, etc. Were you not extreme in any of the areas where a new addiction could become a problem in any of the area of your life? Can you identify points where you behaved like a mature, thoughtful human being?

Diligence - Did you complete what you began? Did you complete work or projects only so far as your return was concerned? Do you have a long list of accomplishments or a trail of broken promises - of beginnings without completion? Were your thoughts to fulfill your commitment to the individual institution you planned to help, or did you flit from nice thought to nice thought while really focusing on the benefit we would receive in pride, goods, services, recognition, or reputation? Did you ever keep your word and act in an honorable fashion, even if you did not wind up getting what you wanted?

Kindness - Were we kind? To others? To strangers? To animals? To children - your own and others? Was your kindness followed with gossip or back-biting? Did we restrain from judgement of others and offer the comfort and forgiveness you hope to find? Were

you considerate of people and hold yourself to the same standards you wanted to impose on them?

Patience - Could you wait for things to turn out or did you push, become frustrated, manipulate, demand? Was your patience complete or measured to the level of getting what you wanted? Did you do what you did for result in your time or allow whatever power-greater-than-yourself to be in charge? With yourself and others?

Humility - Were you able to go unrecognized and be satisfied that the right thing was done? Did we demand that people recognized your actions and that credit was not assigned to someone other than you. Were you able to serve “anonymously” — without your name involved? Did you seek to be comforted rather than to comfort? Were you “special” or just another one of God’s Kids doing the best you could and striving to do/be better?

You might find instances in your early life, or in the early days of your drinking and using. If you cannot find anything of merit in your past, perhaps these will become goals in your awareness of your day to day functioning.

Do you have any of these after your career drinking and using? Did you claim to have them while doing damage to those around you?

If you had these and have not lost them, acknowledge them as the gifts they are and be grateful for them. Do not think you are wonderful because you did not destroy the basic qualities we are suppose to retain as part of our personally defined “spiritual life.”

If you find such positive attributes are you willing to be grateful for them and *to keep your hands off*? What is not broken does not need to be fixed. You have enough damage to deal with.

But if you lost them along the way, or you feel you never had them, you can aspire to get them, and keep them. It will become your target of what to do, not just to think about or say.

Action is the magic word.

No one does it perfectly, but if we do not strive to be better. what is our goal?

Within the limitations of these Virtues, can you approach the fact you may have some bits of your nature that were good and proper, even in the depth of your disease?

Can you hold on to that thought without swelling up with Pride, which puts everything at risk?

Can you look upon anything positive which may have survived your journey downward and see where you actually did good, or when you did good only to

reap a reward for the people or groups you were supposedly doing your great acts “for?”

Gifts

Did you have Gifts? These would be abilities that just seemed to come easily to you in the way of talent, understanding or intuition. Did you share those gifts for the benefit of others or did you use them to manipulate events to your own ends?

If you were given the gift of Leadership, did you use it to Lead and benefit those who would follow, or did you use it to grab as much as you could or get other people to do what you wanted them to do?

If you could Comfort, did you withhold that comfort until your target gave you what you wanted or provided something you could use to satisfy your own greed or desire before you would use your gift?

We have talents in areas that brought benefit or comfort to others? Music? Counseling? Cooking? Organizing? Did you use these talents to your own ends or the benefit of others?

Was your Asset something that was a benefit to those around you or used as a weapon to control situations and people to feed your own desires?

Use a fresh page in your notebook and write a list of assets, gifts or talents or abilities you feel you have been given. What have you been given the talent to do.

As you did with your Names, work down the column. Beside each Asset, write how you have used it.

The purpose of knowing your Assets is to show where you have been given a gift, and where you have abused that gift in the course of your Alcoholism.

If you identify an Asset that you have used correctly - do not try to “fix” it! Be grateful and, when the time comes, be ready to turn that asset over to your

Higher Power to allow it to benefit those you would help.

It is the nature of alcoholics in the throes of the disease to injure and abuse other people and to lessen and abuse themselves in the constant struggle for more of everything.

We demanded more money, sex, power, prestige, possessions or satisfaction but no matter how great our acquisitions, we are never satisfied.

We take more pride in our ability to be more defective than others and judge everything about ourselves as defective.

In the Ninth Step promises we are told:

“No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.”

Column Four

Column Four will take up the last column of your two-page spread. Leave this column blank until you get together with your sponsor for your Fifth Step.

You do not evaluate what you should put there. After you have finished as much of your inventory as you can, you will go to your sponsor, or the person with whom you will share this Inventory, and you will add to the Fourth Column what the two of you agree identifies more clarity about you. It is your inventory and it does no good to get better rationalizations about them. *You* are here, it is *your* inventory. Focus *on you!*

NOTE: Yes, we know the first 181 pages do not use the word “sponsor.” They did have sponsors —, Ebby sponsored Bill, Bill sponsored Bob. Together Bill and Bob sponsored most of the first 100 men and women to get, and stay sober. They *did* have sponsors, they didn’t use that word, yet. Get a sponsor who has sobriety the way you would like to have sobriety, Get someone who can be safe to ask first questions. Get someone who scares you, just a little — maybe they can see through your rationalizations, justifications, and outright lies (whether you know they are lies or not). Get someone who can share what they have done, not what they have theories about how other people should have done it. Get someone with *experience*, not theory and opinions.

Your Fifth Step

"This is the step that separates the men from boys" (or the girls from women). Step Five breaks the pattern of secrets and isolation that have kept us drunk and held down by our disease."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Page 63

Your Sponsor is one of the tools of the program and like any tool it will not help you if you do not use it appropriately. Your Sponsor will give you some directions on how your Fifth Step will be conducted - the place, time, duration and process.

Most Fifth Steps are done with the Sponsor and the person whose Fifth Step is being heard separated from distractions. Your Sponsor may want you to go to a special location (your home, the Sponsor's home, a peaceful outdoor location, etc.) to get this personal time. The goal is to remove distractions so you can concentrate on the work of breaking the lifetime habit of keeping the secrets and hiding the truth from yourself and others.

This is when you will use Column Four on your Inventory. It is commonly called "What is Your Part?"

Before taking Step Five we are given some specific directions to review our work so far.

"If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot."

"We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can."

Page 70

"When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence."

Page 75

There is no "perfect" Fourth Step - the World Service Office is not reserving a special niche for *your* inventory to show the world how an inventory should be done. You do your Fourth the very best you can do it and - most often - will find that there is enough relief from the past to move forward with your Recovery.

There is only one way to do it wrong - to not do it.

Your Sponsor will probably ask questions to clarify some of the points you have written. This will be your opportunity to give more detail beyond the 19 words you were allowed for anything on your list.

You may be directed to write into the fourth column of the inventory to identify the exact nature of the problem. What was your part in this entry on the Inventory? What does it tell you about yourself, your personal defects or shortcomings?

A Sponsor will usually tell you something of their own story to show how they have had to deal with items from their own Inventory to give you a real example of how a similar problem was handled in the Sponsor's own inventory. Your Sponsor will also guide you away from focus on how others have harmed you, but how you have participated in the process of stepping on their toes and causing them to retaliate. Sometimes a Sponsor will need to point out when you have been taking something as a personal injury that was simply a fact of life affecting others at the same time.

"The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. This tends to clear away morbidity and encourage balance. As soon as he begins to be more objective, the newcomer can fearlessly, rather than fearfully, look at his own defects."

The Twelve and Twelve, Page 46

You do not need to understand the process - this is not about building your intellectual strength, but getting down to the basic, honest feelings that have been the foundation of your resentments, fears and relationships.

Let your Sponsor guide you and know that there is nothing on your list that does not have a name - and a name means someone else has done it, felt it or had to deal with it. You are not alone.

It is important that you not try to do a Fifth Step alone. You use an Inventory to focus on your own problems - not the defects of the names on your lists. It is for you, your discovery of your own defects and shortcomings, your own spiritual journey and cleaning your side of the street.

You will most likely think of more to go on an inventory after you do your Fifth Step and it doesn't matter what you call the continuation of your Inventory. The Tenth Step says "Continued to take personal inventory..." so you might want to look at additions as part of your Tenth Step or a new Fourth Step.

You may find there is a particular area of your life where you want to focus on a new inventory - your marriage, secret crimes (such as stealing, hidden judgements, gossip, withholding care or money or connection with children or parents, etc.). Discuss these with your Sponsor to determine the best way to approach such new house-cleanings.

The only thing that matters is doing the Work and putting pen to paper. Just do it.

Your Fourth Step is a real milestone in your commitment and progress to your Recovery. Your Fifth Step is an additional level in getting honest with yourself, with God, and with another human being.

The Secret Steps

The Big Book only gives one paragraph on Step Six or Seven and, while the Twelve Steps and Twelve Tradition gives further instructions, these Steps require us to review you in the first five Steps to find out what our Inventory has revealed - or confirmed - about our own problems.

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for a hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last.

"Is our work solid so far?"

"Are the stones properly in place?"

"Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?"

"Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

Page 87

The Big Book frequently uses terms "short-comings" and "defects". One way to look at these problems is to define them, even if Bill did not write the definitions in the Big Book, several other people have provided definitions over the years.

For our purpose, let us think of a "shortcoming" as something you need to have but do not have enough of (such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, love, charity, forgiveness, etc.).

A "defect" can be thought of as something you have, but is either wrong, damaged, or being used to make it a weapon to cause damage to others.

Both of these problems need to be cleared, but first you must know what is true about yourself, even if it

means losing some of the old comfort of your victimhood, your righteousness, your belief that you were right or that you had the ability to define the world or other people.

The purpose is to see your own real problems - the thing that either led you to drink or to find comfort in alcoholic numbness and oblivion.

In your inventory you found things of value - the Big Book tells us to inventory everything, including our assets. Assets are not there for us to take comfort that we still have something worth keeping - assets are things we have the ability to do but have not been able to use properly.

Step Six

The Big Book only gives one paragraph on Step Six and, while the Twelve Steps and Twelve Tradition gives further instructions, this Step requires you to review you in the first five Steps to find out what your Inventory has revealed - or confirmed - about your own problems.

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for a hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last."

"Is our work solid so far?"

"Are the stones properly in place?"

"Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? "Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

Pages 87-88

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right or that you had the ability to define the world or other people.

The purpose is to see your own real problems - the thing that either led you to drink or to find comfort in alcoholic numbness and oblivion.

In your inventory you found things of value - the Big Book tells us to inventory everything, including our assets. Assets are not there for us to take comfort that we still have something worth keeping - assets are things we have the ability to do but which we may not have used properly or something that we do well that will be of use in our new purpose:

"Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."
(Page 89)

The challenge of Step Six is to look at our own desire to hold onto a defect because of the benefit we receive from it – and we have manipulated well known human flaws, from Seven Deadly Sins to our own special flaws, to serve our desires and selfish goals.

Are you willing to live a life, striving to be an Honest adult, unlike what you have done before you entered your Recovery?

Are you willing to stop gossip? This means repeating things you did not experience, based on the hearsay of other people, or "improving" the story to make it clear to others what you want it to say?

Step Seven

Step Seven may not be what we expected when we began. Like Step Six, there is only one short passage devoted to it in the Big book.

The Seventh Step is not coming up with a list of things we want whatever god we understand to fix and then putting in our service order to have the changes made to our specifications. In Step Seven we surrender everything, including our definitions, to have what is broken fixed, and to live with whatever good may come from doing the Inventory Process. "God's will and the power to carry that out," as the Eleventh Step tells us.

Some people refer to what they call "the Seventh Step Prayer:"

"When ready, we say something like this:

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad.

"I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my

Are you willing to stop telling lies, even if the truth doesn't make people think what you want them to think?

If you give up greed, are you afraid you will lose motivation to make a living or not get things you think you deserve?

If you have been known for sloth, or procrastination, are you willing to do the job required instead of teaching people to not expect you to work?

If your wrath is removed, how will you feel with situations when you feel you have been wronged? Are you willing to live by the same rules you expect of the people around you?

Can you live without your "Righteous Indignation" when you are positive that the other side is wrong and that you may not win? Even at work? Even in politics? Even in questions of religion?

If you succeed in surrendering your Pride, will you be unable to feel satisfaction from your accomplishments?

Step Six prepares you for the work of Step Seven, which requires that you be willing to have god take over everything in your life to heal your problems and make you the person you have the capacity to be.

The goal is to prepare you to be a whole, healthy, emotionally sober, happy human being.

usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."
Page 76

As with with the Third Step Prayer, the opening line of that quote gives you authority to use the wording you need to say achieve the required surrender of the Seventh Step.

You need to say what you mean and mean what you say, 100%.

But many people miss that the Third Step Prayer does not end with "amen" and that the Seventh Step Prayer does. This is because they are an enveloping prayer. The prayer that begins Step Four and ends Step Seven is one Prayer.

Together they would read:

"God I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to

those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always! My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

If you need find other wording to be more appropriate, do so.

Are you in full agreement with the terms of this Third and Seventh Prayers, whether your own wording or directly from the book?

Are you willing to turn everything over to God or Higher Power of your understanding, holding nothing back?

Are you sure you have not deceived yourself by withholding some detail of your past, our desires, your plans or your expectations of how your life and Recovery are supposed to unfold?

This step is complete surrender. We were told

"The results were nil until we let go absolutely."

Page 58

A Word About Judgements

One of the most important lessons we learn is that our judgement of others, or ourselves, has been damaged by our disease. What we consider our most wonderful feature may turn out to be damaging to other people. We are promised that our worst history becomes our greatest asset in helping others.

At this point we not only need to work at our willingness to have our defects removed and our shortcomings corrected, but become willing to use our assets as they were intended – for the benefit of others – or to let them go.

Accepting that we have had assets, and that we have not used those assets properly, is a final phase in becoming willing to have the High Power we found in Steps Two and Three take over everything in our lives.

Our defects. Our shortcomings. Our assets. Everything.

In the beginning we said we were willing to go to any lengths for victory over alcoholism.

This the the length to which we go.

We try to clean house to the best of our ability, knowing that we will continue cleaning for as long as we live.

We strive to be honest in our dealings with those around us, with ourselves, with our past and with our Higher Power.

We work for progress, knowing we will never attain perfection.

Can you confirm to yourself that you have, to the best of your ability, done the work intended behind the prayer?

If you believe you have done the best you can do to this point, knowing you may improve later, you are ready to move into the work of Steps Eight and Nine.

Use this list as a quick review of the process outlined in this booklet.

Inventory Summary

USE YOUR SPONSOR

If your Sponsor wants to do anything differently, go with your Sponsor's direction! You Sponsor knows you as an individual. Your Sponsor may have tools not included in this booklet.

STEPS ONE, TWO AND THREE

Do Dr. Bob's Review Get a Notebook and writing gear.

Set a committed schedule (time, day, hours per week, etc.) and then stick to it. Discuss your time commitment with your Sponsor.

YOUR INVENTORY NOTEBOOK

Write your personal information on Page 1.

Pray before you begin each session - get quiet and do whatever your personal spiritual practice suggests.

Pages two and three are the first two-page spread. Draw a line down the right page approximately in the middle.

WRITING IN COLUMNS

Begin on the left side of the left page margin line to serve as Column One and begin to write names - people, places, institutions, principles, etc. If it comes to mind, write it down. Even if you covered something on a previous inventory - if it comes up write it down!

Write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line - no matter how dramatic or complex you feel that entry to be.

Always work down, not across.

When you cannot think of a name to add to Column One for 20 minutes, begin Column Two.

Column Two will have why this name is on your list. Do not use more than 19 words. If you think of a new name for your list in Column One while doing Column Two, write it at end of your current list of names.

When you have completed the list of names with entries in Column Two, go to Column Three.

Go down the list and read Column One, the item in Column Two related to Column One, and write down in Column Three what this effected. Describe what it

effected in your own words - the Seven Deadly Sins or other list. These must mean something to you, personally.

Hold Column Four until you sit down with your Sponsor for Step Five.

STEP FIVE

Let your Sponsor (or the other person with whom you are doing a Fifth Step) set the time, location and conditions of your Fifth Step. You may want to have a soda, bottle of water or coffee pot available, and may want to plan on sharing a meal if the Fifth will take a long time. Your Fifth (Step may require more than one session, but usually the full Fifth can be done in a single face-to-face session.)

Pray before you begin your Fifth, or whatever your Spiritual practice requires.

As you and your Sponsor discuss the first three columns, write into Column Four exactly what your part was in the item under discussion.

You may want a 2nd page to write a list of recurring defects that come up during your Fifth Step. You may end your Fifth Step with a Prayer or meditation before you leave to do the first hour of your Sixth Step.

STEP SIX

Review your Fifth Step, particularly Column Four, and spend a quiet hour meditating on what you have learned about yourself.

Consider the benefits you get from the defects, shortcomings and the abuse of assets you have identified in your Inventory. Are you willing to surrender those manipulated benefits in favor of have your Higher Power be in charge of your life and rewards? Are you willing to simply do what you are supposed to do without satisfaction of your desires, damage to others or as part of your selfish behaviors?

STEP SEVEN

Pray the full 3rd and 7th Step Prayers, with the personal words necessary for you to mean your prayer. If your belief has other practices or rituals to serve this purpose, do those.

. Remember this is not a one time action, but continue to look for your own selfishness, defects, shortcomings or abuse of your gifts and remain willing to surrender those actions.

Continue Your Inventory as Needed.

On a new page, list your Assets the same way you listed the names in the previous section of the Inventory.

When you can look at the list for ten minutes and not come up with another asset, start the second column of how you have used, or abused, that gift. Keep the entries in this column to a maximum of 19 words.

Do not be surprised if this is the shortest of your Inventory lists.

You need to keep yet another page available to list items that will be required for your Eighth Step - the things for which you must make amends.

Listen to your Sponsor - a Sponsor's experience will be your strongest guide as to how you can deal with your own history.

When you have completed Column Four, discuss what the results will mean for your recovery - what you have learned.

Make an appointment to meet with your Sponsor for your Fifth Step, and keep it.

The Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help the person who wants to get, and stay, clean and sober, do the work and get the result. The Big Book promises clear and simple directions.

The Inventory is to expand our ability to tell the truth (which we had to do to enter the Twelve Step Process) about our whole life and to fulfill our goal "to be of maximum service to God and the people around us" on a new basis of honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. It is the Inventory that proves to us, if no one else, that we are willing to do whatever it takes to keep this thing we call Recovery, or the New Life that results.

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